

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM by the Chairman, Mr. Carpender, and the following members were present:

Mr. Richard Carpender, Chair	Mrs. Marge Levesque, Clerk	Ms. Marilyn King
Ms. Sylvia Wedge, Vice Chair	Mr. Michael Buddemeyer	Mrs. Cynthia Perrotti
	Ms. Angela Volpicelli (6:50 PM)	

Also Present: Dr. Lusi, Asst. Supt. Jermain, Christine Tague, Patti Cofield, Rick Updegrove

Absent: Amy Larsen (High School Liaison)

A motion was made by Ms. Wedge and seconded by Mrs. Levesque to Executive Session pursuant to R.I. Law 42-46-5 (a)(2) Collective Bargaining and/or Litigation. So voted 6-0.

Public Session recessed at 6:31 PM and resumed at 7:10 PM.

1. **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:** Mr. Carpender reported that an Executive Session was held prior this meeting regarding a collective bargaining/litigation issue. No motions were made, and no votes were taken. A motion to seal the minutes was made by Ms. Wedge and seconded by Mrs. Levesque. So voted 7-0. Mr. Carpender announced that this is a special meeting called by the Committee after last week's Town Council meeting. He stated that public comment regarding why or why not Prudence Island School should remain open would not be allowed, as the public had the opportunity to comment at a prior meeting.
2. **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:** Dr. Lusi announced that Senior Project presentations began today and will continue tomorrow. She was able to see three presentations today. Mr. Carpender and Mrs. Levesque were judges for some of the presentations.

3. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion was made by Ms. Wedge and seconded by Mrs. Levesque to approve the minutes of the meeting held April 21, 2009. So voted 6-0-1. Mrs. Perrotti abstained because she was not a member of the Committee at that time.

4. **BUSINESS AGENDA**

- a) **Discussion/Action – Delaying the Closing of Prudence Island School.** Mr. Carpender reported that there was an article in Today's Newport Daily News written by Larry Fitzmorris that is argumentative and misleading. Mr. Carpender stated that when they went to the Town Council, they knew that there were certain members that were looking to keep Prudence Island School open. We went to have the provisional budget approved.

The letter and comments in today's Newport Daily News talks about the PCC leaving alone Prudence Island in the past, but then says that the School Committee and Superintendent openly bargained with the Town Council around keeping the two elementary students at Prudence Island School open. That is not true. We never went over there with the intention of bargaining with them. What we did was to try to propose options once the Council said they wanted to keep the school open. The insinuation that we went over there to bargain to get money back in our budget is not accurate. We voted to close the school last year, and agreed to delay it by one year. Had the council not brought it up, there would not have been any discussion of it by the School Committee. The Town Council was having their own debate on how to keep it open. Our intent was to see how we could cooperate and move the process along. Mr. Carpender told Mr. Fitzmorris that he would not take comment his remarks. He had his opportunity to comment in his letter. If there were a way that the Town Council could accept one of the options we presented them, such as if they wanted to exceed the cap by \$44,000 to keep it open with extremely minimal impact on the tax rate, keeping the school open would be possible, but Mr. Carpender doesn't see any place to go to come up with that money.

Mr. Buddemeyer stated that there simply aren't funds to keep Prudence Island School open. Ms. Volpicelli stated that she wants to see the school stay open, and the Committee needs to do whatever we can do to keep it open. She feels that \$44,000 is a small price to pay for the welfare of our students. She has concerns about a 5 year old traveling on the ferry in inclement weather. She hopes the Town Council can help us. Mrs. Levesque stated that most of the people she hears from feel that Prudence Island School needs to be closed. Everybody pays taxes, and it is a collective responsibility. She stated that we've been working on trying to find a solution for a number of years. She doesn't feel that Prudence Island School will get their mayoral academy in a timely fashion or at all; and delaying the closing of the school again is like delaying the inevitable. She stated that if it is the Committee's desire to delay it for one year, she would go along with it, but she is concerned it will go on and on and on. Ms. Wedge stated that with no malice intended, the Committee did not even consider keeping Prudence Island School open this year when working on our budget because we had already voted to close it two years ago. She stated that last year, we agreed to keep it open one more year only if the Town Council gave us the money to keep it open. The agreement was to only keep it open for only one more year. She stated that the only thing we can do is cut something in our budget that affects 3,000 students, as opposed to 2 or 3 students. Mrs. King stated that she would like to see Prudence Island School remain open for obvious reasons. She hopes the Town Council will come up with some ideas to help them get their charter school open next year. Mrs. Perrotti stated that she went out to Prudence Island last week and toured the school. She stated that the concerns about transportation would be a bother to her as a parent. There is also an historic component to it. She would like to see the school stay open for one more year. However, the writing

is on the wall because resources are so tight. She thinks that since the moratorium was lifted on charter schools, it seems like a great opportunity to give them a chance to try to do it by 2010. She thinks it would be great if the Committee could find the money for these students because it is important to try to fulfill the educational needs of these two students, as they are special in the same regard as Special Education students.

Mr. Carpender stated that the Committee is meeting with the Town Council tomorrow night, and he doesn't think anyone here knows where we can come up with the money to keep Prudence Island School open. He stated that he will layout the Committee's position and concerns with the Town Council. He stated that if the Town Council wants to consider some of the options the Committee put forth last week, such as exceeding the cap by \$44,000, he would like to have something formal from the School Committee, if possible, that would indicate that we would be willing to work with that instead of having to call another meeting. If the Town Council were to say that we will take back the building warrant next year to free up the \$58,000 in our budget for that, he would like to be in a position to say that we agree to that. No one had any comments on that.

Ms. Wedge made a motion that the School Committee further delays the closing of Prudence Island School for one year, only if additional revenue of \$44,000 is received from the Town of Portsmouth. Seconded by Mrs. Levesque.

Ms. Wedge explained that the plan for the Prudence Island students cuts their day by one and a half hours, and the kindergarten student will have a full-day program. Ms. Tague stated that if the school remains open, it would cost another \$115,000 for the teacher. Kathy Melvin takes exception to the motion, adding that the Committee has an obligation to the Prudence Island kids.

Dr. Lusi invited the public to go to the School Department website to find our total budget submission to the Town Council with the Executive Summary and our presentation to the Town Council on May 13<sup>th</sup>. In the School Committee section, all of the documents that were handed out during our Finance Subcommittee meetings are available. Dr. Lusi's thinks those documents more than explain why the School Department hasn't found the money for Prudence Island, why we continue to have a gap, and why the stimulus money is actually being used in lieu of state aid that we were supposed to receive this year. In addition, the \$307,000 in IDEA for the coming year is clearly addressed in the presentation and is for Special Education needs.

Maria Wood of 32 Harris Avenue asked about not hiring an Assistant Principal for half a year to help with the budget. Mr. Carpender stated that there are 1,000 students at the high school. In the mid 1990s, there was just one Assistant Principal at the high school, and there were all kinds of issues then. It is very difficult to have just one Assistant Principal

because the facility is so spread out. Two is basically best practice for a school of this size. Dr. Lusi stated that for next year, our high school is projected to have 1,049. Around the state, when a school approaches 800 to 900 students, they add an Assistant Principal.

Mrs. Melvin stated she thinks there is a spending problem in the state. Mr. Carpender stated that we are working towards trying to do some different things from a strategic standpoint, such as shared services, which was recommended in the Berkshire Report. RIPEC is currently working on a report on regionalization efforts being done on Aquidneck Island. Mrs. Carceller asked about Prudence Island School becoming a mayoral academy. Mr. Marshall stated that applications need to be submitted in December.

Mr. Bearse asked where the spirit of cooperation was in the motion. Mr. Carpender stated that the spirit of cooperation was when the School Committee went to the Town Council and tried to work with them. This conversation wouldn't have taken place if Councilman Canario wasn't so passionate and stated that he would not vote on our budget unless Prudence Island was in there. Mr. Carpender feels that he has no authority to do that. The Town Council has bottom line authority only. Mr. Carpender stated that he can't keep that school open another year knowing that we don't have the money. Mrs. Levesque stated that the Town Council switched gears when the Committee went over to discuss the provisional budget and that the Committee has tried right along to work with them. Mr. Bearse asked Dr. Lusi about the estimated tuition to Bristol-Warren. Dr. Lusi stated that they use the In\$ite data, which hasn't come out yet, so they estimated \$12,000 per student including transportation.

The motion passed 7-0.

A motion was made by Ms. Wedge seconded by Mrs. Levesque to adjourn the meeting. So voted. The Public Session adjourned at 8:09 PM.

Respectfully submitted:

Patti Cofield  
Recording Secretary for:

Marge Levesque, Clerk